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The Right to Freedom

The Bulletin of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96"



«Chernobyl Rally-99», Minsk, April 25...

On the Road of Grief and Sorrow

On the eve of the 13th anniversary of Chernobyl catastrophe more than 5 thousand people walked the traditional «Chernobyl Rally» in Minsk. The march started in Yakub Kolas Square and walked to the Sports Palace.

Minsk City authorities didn't allow the march to start from the Academy of Sciences as it was in previous years. As a result there was an incident with youth half an hour before the march. Several young people did come to the Academy of Sciences where 8 people were arrested (two minors and one girl among them). They were kept for 4 hours in the custody centre and after the end of «Chernobyl rally» they were released without drawing up a report. Militiamen took off camouflage uniform from Syargei Matskoits which was a formal pretext for detention.

In the head of the column the demonstrators carried the icon of Saint Marie of Chernobyl and a bell which measured ringing awoke people's memory and grief. Then they carried slogans with the names of Belarusan regions and towns, which suffered from this catastrophe .

Lyavon Barshchevsky, Stanislaw Bagdankevitch, Syamyon Sharatsky, Yuri Zakharanka, Pavel Kazlovsky, people who have always been in opposition to Lukashenka or have found themselves in it because of his policy, came to pay homage to victims of peaceful atom (or official Soviet falsehood). On the way to the Sports Palace three unknown men attacked Alyaksei Charnyaew, a member of the «Malady Front», and tried to pull him out of the column.

(to be continued on p. 2)

Chronicle

On 8,9,12,14 April **Barys Khamaida, editor in chief of the independent newspaper «Vybar», and Uladzimir Pleshchanka, chairman of the local council of the BPF «Adradzhennie», were detained in Vitsebsk by policemen for the same «breach of the law». They stood in the lively place of a centre of the city and sole independent and opposition newspapers. B.Khamaida held a placard saying «Independent newspapers». Every time after detention they were drawn up reports for taking part in an unauthorised picketing and kept in police station up to three hours. A trial, which took place after their first detention (on 8 March) found them innocent.**

On April 14, **Stsyapan Serabro, an activist of Belarusan Popular Front, was detained in Vitsebsk. They found in his pocket one US dollar with his own image instead of that of the US president. They instituted a criminal case against S.Serabro for breaking Article 84 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (manufacture and imitation of money in order to sale and get profit). According to a barrister – it is nothing like an infringement of the law and violation of the human rights because S.Serabro didn't even intend to sell these «banknotes». It should be mentioned that the «banknotes» of this kind are obtainable in the stalls all over the country. During interrogation S.Serabro was beaten and persistently asked whether this «money» was handed to him by the editor in chief of the newspaper «Vybar» Barys Khamaida.**

(to be continued on pp. 6-7)

Violence is Violence...

Edward Tarletski the head of the League of Sexual Minorities draws the attention of the society to the problems of human rights discrimination in Belarus.

Not long ago on one of the weekends militiamen made a raid on... the sauna in Hmelnitski Street. As it turned out the purpose of the raid was to find and detain citizens of non-traditional sexual orientation, who, according to some resources, used that place as a place for meetings. As a result ordinary people who came to the sauna that day with the trivial desire to wash, suffered...

After that incident Edward Tarletski, the head of the League of Sexual Minorities (LSM) called mass media representatives to inform that the League was going to start struggle against flagrant discrimination of sexual minorities. As it is known, the Ministry of Justice hampers the registration of the League, motivating it by the fact that «in accordance with last changes in the law on public organisations and unions every organisation should present not less than 50 people as its' founders. Certainly the League has such number of people but Mr. Tarletski believes that to accept that would mean to submit a judicial lawlessness caused by the state.

The heads of the League was also offended by a recent conference on the subject «Destructive consequences of international projects on sexual education» initiated by Belarusan excruciate. Besides the fact the conference approved the decision to resist the programmes of sexual education worked out by UNO and UNESCO, there were calls to exterminate gays and lesbians by death penalty as well as the doctors who carry out abortions. To Edward Tarletski mind such slogans pronounced by priests are nonsense.

Such policy has already had its consequences. Employees of the Sexological Centre are forbidden to appear on Belarusan radio; the Ministry of education has been trying to introduce a course of sexual education in schools for 4 years already which contradicts all the international norms.

The League is going to hold a number of pickets against homophobia compressed by the church and against the refusal to register the organisation. The League will also act within the International Organisation of gays and lesbians the member of which it is and which participates in the UNO activities as a consultant. «Evidently, the authorities ignore the fact that the League is occupied not only with psychological rehabilitation of gays and lesbians but also helps AIDS patients and protects people raped in prison»,-says Mr. Tarletski.

Mr. Tarletski also drew the number received from confidential sources of the Ministry of Internal Affairs: 19 people have been murdered within the past year for being gay. Militia doesn't hide this fact but demonstrates unwillingness to pay attention to it. That makes gays to speak up for themselves and to protect themselves, admits Mr. Tarletski. The more so as neo-fascist groups' assaults happen regularly lately.

Ts. P.

Attack on the Poet

Slavamir Adamovich, the unknown poet, who spent ten months in the KGB prison for writing an anti-presidential poem, was knocked down in the centre of Minsk on the 23 April. This happened at the entrance to the house in Babruiskaya Street, in which the editor's office of the newspaper «Nasha Niva» is situated. That is the office he was going to when two people (who seemed to be waiting for somebody as Slavamir said) attacked him. The third offender was watching at the entrance. The poet was slightly injured.

At first the attack was attributed to Minsk affiliate of the neo-fascist organisation Russian National Unity, which members threatened the journalists of the «Nasha Niva» after the publication of several articles about Russian fascism. About a month ago they even visited the editor's office of «NN» and informed them about kidnapping of one of those articles' authors. Though it turned out they were bluffing, the «hostage», once a good friend of neo-fascists, now looks intimidated and the newspaper has received threats on the phone. So it's very likely they have chosen Adamovich for carrying out their threats.

But the victim himself refused the version of RNU's participation in the attack in the talk with our correspondent. He thought he was attacked because he was the secretary of Minsk City Commission on Presidential Elections. The attack was just another attempt to intimidate the members of the commission. The unknown people in civil clothes are likely to be connected with Lukashenka's intelligence services, thinks Adamovich.

Yana ZHDANOVITCH

On the Road of Grief and Sorrow

According to the words of Alyaksei Chakholski, the secretary of the board of BPF, the stool pigeons counted on having a fight with members of the «Malady Front». But they maintained order and protected their friend. They drove them away from the column.

This year the meeting was unusually short and terse. The City Executive Committee made everything possible to leave the organisers without sound-intensifying equipment. The participants of the meeting paid homage to Arnold Pyachersky by the minute of silence. He was the head of the Businessmen's trade union «Sadruzhnast» in Minsk and Minsk region who was killed in a car accident under un-



clear circumstances on April 24. Catholic and Orthodox priests, father Andrus and father Igar prayed for Belarus... It was the second meeting at a time when the Belarusan opposition kept the minute of silence (on the Liberty Day —to pay homage to Vyachaslaw Charnavil, that time — to Arnold Pyachersky), and between these meetings we lost Genadz Karpenka...

The meeting wrecked by the authorities most of all upset it seems to me, Pyotr Kaznacheev, the head of the Russian «Antifascist youth activity». First of all, the Moscovites are not accustomed yet to our realities. Then, Pyotr confessed that this time he was going to speak to Belarusans in the Belarusan language. He was preparing but the regime didn't allow him to. In spite of the fact that last year about 15 Russian antifascists were arrested after «Chernobyl Rally-98» they came here again only there was no word (idiot) in their slogans against integration with the dictator. But some well-known politicians from Moscow whose visit was expected didn't come. Also there was no guest from Kiev. When in the sea of white-red-white flags I saw a yellow-blue one it turned out to be carried by an ethnic Ukrainian.

Expelled for Thinking Differently

The right to education is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus. But it is not guaranteed by Lukashenka's regime. The struggle with people thinking differently in the institutions of higher education is in full swing. Expulsion of students who don't agree with Lukashenka's policy is becoming a usual and frequent thing. We are going to talk about a typical case...

In the end of February German Sushkevitch, a second-year student, was expelled from the computer systems department of Belarusan State University of Informatics and Radio-electronics. The official formulation of the reason for expulsion is «not satisfactory progress in his academic studies.» But after a close examination of the case some questions arise. First of all because of the surprising coincidence — German is a member of the «Malady Front». The young man never made secret of his political views and took an active part in many actions: he collected signatures for release of political prisoners (in particular, of Alyaksei Shydlowsky and Vadzim Labkovich), for Lukashenka's resignation. After street demonstrations and meetings he got into custody centre several times and not because of real violations of the law but just because it had become a usual thing to detain participants of peaceful demonstrations. During past years the same has happened to tens and hundreds of Belarusans.

At first German's age saved him. While he was a minor he would be released from custody and his case would be directed to the district commission on minors' cases. Every time the commission required from him the promise «not to do that again» and let him free. But when he became eighteen-year old one of the signs of his age was his 3-days detention at the custody centre. In that way the authorities today celebrate the 18th birthday of the most politically conscious part of Belarusan youth. German was taken into custody after the Liberty Day.

We cannot say that German's detention was noticed at once at the University; he passed all his summer exams without any problems. Someone may think that the department's heads gave the student a chance to improve and he will be wrong. At that time they were busy with another big problem. «It's spring of 1998 when students, Ales Mukhin, Andrey Gilevitch and Pavel Murashka, were expelled from the same faculty. They got into the custody centre for the slogans «Long live Belarus!», «Long live NRM!» and white-red-white flags painted on the wall. They were punished with suspended sentences.

Half a year later one of the department's teachers refused to give German a credit for the course of programming. He even didn't want to examine him. Though on previous exams in the subject German received only «excellent» marks the teacher was saying he wouldn't give him the credit.



Nobody knew the day of passing the credit. It was announced unexpectedly, just two hours before. Due to that, as German says, he didn't have to put the credit off at least till the next day. But Mr. Dzemidovich, known at the University by his persistence and adherence to principles, required immediate fulfilment of the task.

Realising the situation German understood he had few chances to get a good mark that day. And as well as other students he didn't get it. In such situations nothing awful happens: you just have to get prepared and to come one more time to pass it but ... German Sushkevich couldn't imagine at that time that the situation was created deliberately. Most probably, he was just «being caught». After German didn't pass his credit for the first time Dzemidovich didn't even want to talk with him about the second try. When he, at last, agreed the unwanted student's paper vanished somewhere and his first paper with mistakes and written without preparation was kept in the dean's office. So, formally, the credit wasn't passed.

The deputy dean didn't allow German to pass his session. The second-year student wrote several applications to the dean's office to assign another examiner or to create a commission. Though German didn't question his knowledge any more he had to ask for a credit. German applied to the students' union, to the head of the department, to the pro-rector – everybody sympathised in word but «couldn't help in deed».

At last the student was allowed to pass his exams. In three days he passed three exams. And fell ill. While he was recovering the session period finished. When he showed medical documents from the hospital at the dean's office he was said: «We are not interested in it». The credit for the course of programming remained a «debt». Mr. Dzemidovich still didn't want to make sure of German's knowledge. The terms of the session were impeccably coming to the deadlines. At last on February 24 when German Sushkevich came to the dean's office to write a next request for assigning another teacher he met Barys Nikulichyn the dean, who informed him about the decision of the rector to expel him...

After being expelled the former student faced even more hostile attitude, comparing with that of his student's times, of some employees of his «alma mater» towards him. During almost a month they refused to give him the order of his expulsion, motivating it with different reasons. Once Mr. Nikulichyn, the dean threatened to throw him away from the university because «he was nothing there anymore». The former student didn't intend to do anything bad. He just asked to make a copy of the rector's order. When they denied he just copied it himself in writing. And he addressed the dean to sign it. He was proposed to renew his studies only on the payment basis. But Mr. Nikulichyn said that even on that basis he wouldn't accept him. He was not needed.

One can see connection between German Sushkevich's life and life of his persecutors. German dreams of living in free, independent European Belarus. Mr. Dzemidovich who got rid of him on principle would confess: «Such country as Belarus doesn't exist for me». Does it really exist for Mr. Nikulichyn who came to Belarus from Russia in his time and made a great rise in his career in the years of Lukashenka's presidency? That is a question. In fact, it is a tendency of our times to deprive politically conscious students of the right to higher education. But in Minsk State University of Informatics and Radio-electronics it has become a tradition. In contrast with other establishments of higher education nobody even tries to protect young people there. Officials from education, the human resources of «old communist hardening» who have lives of young people in their hands are really to carry out any orders from «above». Today German Sushkevich continues to work as he did all the time of his studies at the University. His profession is in demand nowadays. «For me it is not a problem to find a job, - says German. - But I would like to continue my education». I want to wish to all young people to become real professionals in their field in spite of all the regime that tries to deprive them of their future and together with them all Belarus.

Tatyana SNITKO

MAN DIED

BUT THERE IS ... NOBODY TO BLAME

I.

Two men drank vodka and took it with beer. This pleasant occupation was interrupted by a third one who also wanted to have a drink but didn't have money to buy it. So this third «borrowed» a glass of beer from those two without saying a word. Naturally, they didn't like such impudence and shaved him out of the alehouse. Shoved rather rudely.

That time it was his turn to get offended. He rushed to his house, took there a kitchen knife and returning stabbed it into the heart of one of the offenders. Doctors certified instantaneous death...

The criminal case of that tragic incident was heard in the Minsk City Court several years ago but unfortunately, it didn't lose its actuality. At that time the murder, Eduard M., was 18 years old and the murdered man left two children and the wife who was an alcohol addict.

From the point of view of criminalistics the case was not difficult. The investigator had to fulfil properly all the formalities and to hand over the case to court. Which was actually done.

However, the court passed the following ruling «To exempt Eduard M. from the criminal responsibility for his dangerous actions... which were committed in the state of memory loss». The court ruled to apply compulsory medical treatment. He turned out to be insane.

Every murder goes through the medical commission. The more so as after conversation with Eduard the investigator got obvious doubts concerning his sanity. The medical resolution only confirmed it: he was hot-tempered, during outbursts of malice he didn't control himself, his eyes became «mad», foam appeared at his mouth he still believed it was the right thing to kill.

Eduard M. went through stationary commission at the Republic clinical mental hospital in the so-called «Navinki» (the name of the part of town where the hospital is situated). The diagnosis is: inborn mental backwardness with personality's psychopathisation of the epileptic tape.

Mental backwardness itself cannot save as the reason to consider the person mentally insane. But if it is combined with psychopathisation of personality the insanity is not questionable. Psychopaths are divided into 8 groups. Eduard was ascribed to epileptic the symptoms of which are extreme irritability, bouts of depression, fear, anger impatience, obstinacy and, accordingly, susceptibility to offence, cruelty, scandals...

How did the society get such a dangerous «present», a kind of a «bomb», which was to blow sooner or later? Eduard, was born in a family with 3 children. His parents drank and his mother was deprived of the parents' rights. He began to walk when he was 3 years old and at the same age he began to talk. He was brought up in a twenty-four-hour kindergarten. At school he had a lot of problems with his studying. He finished 7 forms at a school for backward children, where often had conflicts with children and teachers. The principal of the school characterised him as hot-tempered and very reticent.

Only on the criminal case's grounds Eduard turns out to be insane. During the commission doctors stated an obvious fact. Which was not revealed by them earlier, by the way, and led to the death of an innocent man.

II.

Now it is forgotten a little, but earlier, in the times of the Soviet Union, the psychiatry performed some functions which were «not traditional». For instance, registering persons without their agreement and even without their being informed. Absolutely sane people, but dissidents, that is those, whose the most popular diagnosis was «latent schizophrenia». Psychiatrists don't like to talk about it. But it took place. I keep a list of about 150 people unlawfully subjected to repression. And they are only those whose absolute sanity can be proved. Their «disease» and correspondingly, the fault lay in their protest against the existing system.

Today former functions of the psychiatry are carried out by other punitive institutions. The legislation doesn't allow to treat patients without their or their relatives' agreement. Such a person can be taken to a psychiatrist by his/her relatives or militia. The latter one when the signs of insanity are obvious.

In this case you have to write an application to the head of the city mental hospital. He gives his permission for the first commission. But he doesn't have the right to send this person for compulsory treatment either. This decision has to be taken by the special commission. Schizophrenics, neurotics and backward people, for example, are the first to fall away. Their treatment is admitted only in serious cases such as murder, attempted murder, attempt of committing suicide and so on. It is characteristic that diagnosis list today has sharply decreased.

«Clients» are divided into 4 groups accordingly to the seriousness of disease. Them who fall into the first group must be visited by doctor at least onece per two weeks at their homes. Those of the second group - once per month... In fact the situation , to put it mildly, is more complicated. It happens sometimes that because of the shortage of tranquillisers the acute condition of the disease cannot be stopped. Then irremediable happens.

The most publicised incident took place some years ago when an insane man killed his mother and injured his sister. It seems to be clean that it could have happened only because of the negligence or mistakes of the doctors. But the case didn't reach the court room – the psychiatry is a delicate thing. For instance, it is considered impossible to predict acute condition of the disease.

Though, it is difficult to agree with that. With constant and attentive observing a patient the doctor cannot fail to notice the changes in his/her condition and to take the necessary precautions. Formally, a doctor can be brought to trial according to Articles 177,178 of the Criminal Code of Belarus. For example, for carrying out inadequate medical treatment or for a wrong diagnosis. But the paradox is that the case can be proved only by psychiatrists. And are they eager «to grass on» their colleague if they can easily find themselves in his shoes?..

But a man had died... Here a series of new questions arises. What burden of responsibility should be attached to the murderer's parents? Or the doctors who examined Eduard in his childhood and didn't find anything dangerous for the society? Or the teachers at school who knew perfectly well what the «reticent» boy's mind was hiding?

The court didn't discuss the degree of responsibility of any of those people or institutions. It didn't point out guilty people de jure. But de facto they exist. The whole system of providing psychiatric help which hasn't greatly changed since the Soviet times is responsible. It may have changed only in the form. Usually the doctors only establish facts. Practically, the system of prophylactics doesn't exist. The conclusion is: the full burden of responsibility should be taken by the state which didn't create this system.

III.

But, as they say, there is time to gather the stones. Eduard went to the mental hospital for compulsory treatment, and his «offender» to the graveyard. In the course of time Eduard will be transferred into a lighter regime in a psychiatric health centre. Finally, the commission will admit a steady remission, the patient is even likely to be discharged from hospital to be observed by the doctor at home. And Eduard will be back to live among us. I, personally, don't know cases when the court has had «a deeper perspective» and tried to clear out the degree of responsibility of the psychiatrist.

In this case what are we (people who don't even know that everyday their life is put at risk) to do? I recommend to base your reasoning on simple logic. The psychiatry get receives its financing from the state budget. One of its sources is the taxes we pay. In different words, we pay to ensure that the state by means of psychiatry will protect us from such «Eduards». In fact, we have the right to sue the state for physical, moral and financial losses. If the court cannot or doesn't want to find the concrete guilty person (the court is also a state institution) it means that we can readdress our claims to the state. As the state today is associated with only one person (who was taken over the power and, consequently, all the responsibility), we should bring civil actions against the president of the state. In any case, nobody can forbid it or deny to accept them.

Maybe, it is not the way-out. But something should be done. Because innocent people die. And any of us can find him/herself in the place of victim.

Andrei SYARZHAN

It is said and written a lot about dispossession of the kulaks of Belarusan peasantry in the 30s. But it's a big mistake to consider this tragedy belongs to the past. Even now the descendants of the people whose lives were destroyed by the Bolshevik regime crave for the restoration of justice, demanding at least material compensation for the former violence. This compensation could be an essential means of support for most of them as the majority of these people are old and ill.

Game in Non-Committal Replies

Peasant Yefrasinya Gukava fights for her rights for forty years



Everything around belongs to collective farm...

For almost forty years Yefrasinya Gukava has been fighting with the authorities. Vain is her demand of justice from the regime that destroyed her house in 1933, and ruined the destiny of her whole family. Even today she can't tell without tears about what she went through...

Her family lived in the village Zhartsy, Polatsk district. Yefrasinya was six years old when «dispossession of the kulaks» came to her house. There were 11 children in the family besides her. It was good household – her father, «kulak» Ambrosi, a man respected by the villagers, had a horse, a car and pigs.

When shouting and swearing «commissars» were taking everything, the wife of the owner pushed her young children into the pit with the potatoes. She hoped it might stop the criminals. But the `Builders of the new life» pulled the children out of the pit by holding their hair. They didn't want to leave even the rest of the food for the family. Yefrasinya Ambrosiewna will remember for the rest of her life how she was grabbing by shoes those who were destroying the household: «Sir, please, leave us at least something or we will die from hunger!» As an answer she heard: «Die!»

The witnesses of the violence Zuew family went through that day are still alive. According to the standards of that time the family was lucky – as only the father was taken away to Siberia where he was lost forever. The rest of the family was allowed to live in the destroyed house, on the condition that «kulak's» wife couldn't work in the collective farm.

Five younger children of the Zuew fa-mily died from hunger. The oldest brother, 17 years old, followed his father's destiny. Someone from his team stole a sack of corn from the collective farm. The Zuew boy was considered guilty. The relatives brought up the other children. As for Yefrasinya Zueva (in marriage Gukava) she had to go through horrors herself. During the fascist occupation she worked at the officer's kitchen were once she nearly became the victim of the commandant. She was almost hunted down to death by the dogs. The German doctor saved her...

In 1960 Yefrasinya Ambrosiewna received a letter from the Vitsebsk regional court, which said: «The verdict of the court from the 26[th] of December 1933 was cancelled as there was no proof of the facts of the crime...» The official attitude in the country to mass «crimes» and «punishments» had changed. Relatives gave woman a piece of advice to apply for the material compensation for everything that was confiscated from her family in 1933. That is the moment when non-committal replies started and are still going on.

There is a pile of papers in front of me. Some of the documents are very old and yellowed; some are very new – with red-green regalias of the Administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus. The only difference between them is the state emblem.

On her first inquiry about the return of the property Yefrasinya Ambrosiewna received a reply from the KGB under the Council of Ministers of the Vitsebsk region: «We inform you that your inquiry had been studied and was directed to the Financial Department from where you'll receive the additional answer...»

The «additional» answer came on the 23[d] of November 1960: «We inform you that with the question of the property confiscated during the arrest of your father you should apply to the KGB under the Council of Ministers».

And again explanations were given by KGB. The officer Abnyukh informed Yef-rasinya Ambrosiewna on the 29[th] of December: «We studied the given materials and your inquiry was directed to the Financial Department of the Executive Committee of the Vitsebsk region to make the decision. There is no other decision we can make».

But Yefrasinya Ambrosiewna didn't give up. After numerous inquiries she finally received a more «concrete» answer. On the 6[th] of February 1961 the Financial Department of the Executive Committee of the Vitsebsk region informed her, that: «The materials of the case of the citizen Zuew show, that the property confiscated during his arrest was turned over to the collective farm of the village Vyalikiya Zhartsy. According to the law the claim of the confiscated property should be placed upon the side that received this property...»

Then there is a break in correspondence of the woman with the authorities. The Khruschov «thaw» ended. It was not difficult even for almost illiterate woman to realise the consequences of the continuation of the fight. She restarted her attempts when another «thaw» came – Gorbachov.

«The Commission for the realisation of the rights of the victims of the political

(to be continued on p.7)

Events Facts Comments



(beginning on p.1)

On April 14, a flat of Stsyapan Serabro was searched by policemen at midnight in the presence of Syargei Serabro in Vitsebsk. They confiscated a computer, a printer, 50 disks, issues of the newspaper «Vybar», a letter by Khamaida to the Jews world wide to support U.Pleshchanka who had been groundlessly kept in custody for seven months. They carried out search as though on the basis of an instituted case against S.Serabro for breaking Article 84 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus. This search was nothing but the breach of the law. According to Belarusan legislature the search was to be held by the investigator who deals directly with this case.

On 15 April, a computer of Syargei Serabro was confiscated from his working place. On this very day the brothers Syargei and Styapan Serabro were detained and kept in custody three days. They were accused after being kept in custody 20 hours (according to the current legislation it was to be done following tree hours of detention). Syargei Serabro went on hunger strike.

On 17 April, Tadevush Gavin, chairman of the Poles Association of Belarus, was detained for holding a picket in support of Polish schools in Belarus. Court hearings on this case took place on 21 April in the Leninski district court of Grodna. Court's resolution said: «Tadevush Gavin as initiator of the picketing held on 12 March used a placard saying «vice-premier U.Zamyatalin, deputy chairman of the Oblast Executive Committee M.Birukova, chairman of the Navagaradak Executive Committee A.Lis suppress the Polish language!» The trial found him guilty and accused of insulting Belarusan officials. T.Gavin was fined 115 million roubles (approximately 300 US dollars).

On 21 April, a case of Yawgen Mikalutsky's assassination, who used to be a chairman of the State Control Committee of Magileu region (oblast), a deputy of the National Assembly and a friend of A.Lukashenka, was tried in the Supreme Court of Belarus. Yawgen Mikalutsky perished in the Autumn of 1997. He died as a result of explosion of a radio-controlled explosive mechanism, which was mounted in the entrance of the house he lived in. Three Magileu residents are brought to trial – Gawrylaw, Radzikowski and Yanchewski. One of them is directly accused of assassination of Y.Mikalutsky. The rest are charged with preparing the attempt upon the A.Lukashenka's life. According to the investigation the accused were confiscated sub-machine-guns, hand-grenades and equipment for overhearing. The trial is closed behind doors. Even the represen-tatives of the OSCE mission in Belarus – Nadzeya Dudarava and Cristofer Panico -were not allowed to take part in court hearings. An accused Radzikowski's appeal to be defended by public defendant from Belarusan Helsinki Committee was rejected.

In April, a criminal case was instituted on a charge of giving false evidence by Vera Stramkowskaya. The criminal case was instituted in compliance with Article 128 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus which provides amenability up to three years of imprisonment or two years of corrective labours or a fine. According to the Prosecutor of Kirawski district (Magileu region) the criminal case was instituted on the basis of a statement done by Anatol Smalentsaw, head of the group which investigates the case of Vasil Staravoitaw, former chairman of an agricultural joint-stock venture «Rassvet». A.Smalentsaw considers that during the trial the barrister Vera Stramkowskaya gave evidence known to be false which do discredit barrister's honour and dignity. The core of the problem is the following: V.Stramkowskaya rose the question about care of material evidences which were confiscated while searching a house of V.Staravoitaw. The question is about forty bottles of a brandy «Belyi Aist» (White stork). V.Stramkowskaya says that the question she asked is within the current legislature and there is nothing which could contradict it.

On 21 April, the members of Malady Front Ambrazevich Liavon (a minor), Sharamet Mikhail (a minor as well), Kiiko Natallya and Biaroza Yliya were detained in Varvasheni Street at about 21.15 for distributing the leaflets inviting to take part in traditional «Chernobyl rally» which was permitted by the city authorities and was to be held on 25 April in Minsk. They were taken to the Minsk Central district's Administration of Internal Affairs where the minor members of Malady Front were kept for an hour and a half and then released wi-thout giving any information to their parents. N.Kiiko and Y.Biaroza were drawn up reports and then released. The detained young people were confiscated about 1000 leaflets-invitations.

On 22 and 28 April, two pickets were held in Minsk by the Human Rights Centre «Viasna-96» which were devoted to the numerous facts of of human rights violations in Belarus.

On 25 April, a not sanctioned march of youth devoted to the 13th anniversary of Chernobyl catastrophe took place in Crodna at about 21.00 p.m. the marchers were going along Grodna streets flying the national white-red-white flags. There were any slogans or cry outs. The marchers in total silence took torches – a symbol of grief about the Chernobyl victims. 38 young people took part in the procession. The column was driven up by police car. The policemen sprang out of the car and got down to «work». They tried to catch and draw into the car the participants of the procession. Following some time another car of OMON (special militia troops) soldiers drew up the marchers. Using the police batons and teargas they tried to break up a peaceful demonstration. Some policemen had submachine-guns. They came to blows. Moreover, it should be emphasised, the policemen and special troops attacked the marchers while they just tried to defend themselves. As a result 14 young people were detained and placed to custody (four out fourteen detained were minors). An innocent passer-by I.Baranaw, resident of the Grodna city, who did not take part in the march and in fight suffered from policemen (he was also detained). The policemen beat detained young people while bringing them to the Leniniski Administration of Internal Affairs of the city of Grodna. Two minors were cut some locks of hair. Three marchers were taken from the aforesaid Administration of Internal Affairs by ambulance. Follo-wing some time two of them were back to police station. Nineteen year old resident of Minsk city was forced to go to hospital (injury department), for he was broken a nose by the boot blow of policeman. Many participants of this action were forced to turn for medical help. According to a witness a girl from Babruisk had a concussion. On April 26 trial took place. The judge of the Leninski district court of the city of Grodna Yawgen Kaziak sentenced four people to two days of administrative arrest. On the

whole the majority of detained people were sentenced and brought verdicts ranging from two up to four days in administrative detention. I.Baranaw was fined 1 million roubles. On April 27 two accused were released. On April 28 people sentenced to tree days of administrative arrest were also discharged.

On 25 April, the «Chernobyl rally» devoted to the 13th anniversary of the tragedy, which had already become traditional one in Belarus, took place in Minsk. Eight participants of this rally were taken to the Administration of Internal Affairs of Savetski district of the city of Minsk. To be exact they even did not manage to take part in «Chernobyl rally». Detained people addressed to the Human Rights Centre «Viasna-96». Alexander Ungur's application says: «I was detained by policemen at about 12.00 a.m. near the National Academy of Sciences together with V.Brutski, A.Siets'ka, Yu.Meliashkevich (a minor), S.Matskoits, L.Ambrazevich (a minor), A.Lazarchyk and M.Kunina (a minor). The policemen introduced them-selves. They were Yakubovich, Philipovich and Ts-mokhaw. We were accused of «unauthorised assembly» and brought to the Administration of Internal Affairs of Savetski district. We were kept there for more than three hours without drawing up reports excepting S.Matskoits. We were threatened and subjected to pressure, they humiliate our human being's dignity and mocked at us». Maryia Kunina witnessed the fol-lowing: «We stood near «Kastrychnik» cinema waiting for people who read leaflets in-viting them to take part in «Chernobyl rally» and to gather near the «Academy of Sciences». We wanted to bring them without any excesses to the allowed by the city authorities meeting in Yakub Square». After the end of the rally the detained were released.

On 26 April, by night the headquarters of Mikhail Chygir was robbed by unk-nown people in masks.

On 26 April, Valery Levanewski, a leader of entrepreneur's trade union of the city of Grodna, was sentenced to 13 days of administrative arrest for an attempt to get in to reception room of the deputy chairman of the City Executive Committee Mrs.Lawtsel. Some entrepreneurs were not allowed to hold a meeting on issues connected with certification of goods they sold and that's why they tried to clarify the reason of it and to go to the deputy chairman of Grodna Executive Committee. Among them was Valery Levanewski. According to Levanews-ki there was nothing in common with politics: there were no placards, no appearances of unsatisfied people. When he was curious about why people were not let to the building of the City Executive Committee he was immediately accused of organising an unauthorised meeting and drawn up a report. V.Levanewski states that: «...the court's verdict of this kind had been expected before I went to the Executive Committee. The real reason was that Lukashenka was supposedly going to visit the City of Grodna. That's why they put myself in custody for thirteen days. It's nothing but pure provocation».

In April, Valery Furs, deputy Prosecutor of the city of Gomel, instituted a criminal case in compliance with the article 188 (p.2) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus accu-sing the former minister of Internal Affairs Yuri Zakharanka of «impact on police official aimed at putting obstacles for him to carry out his duties». Yuri Zakharanka coordinates the activities of Mikhail Chyhir in Gomel region. The article he is accused of provides amenability ranging from corrective works up to one year to a fine. A country wide inquiry was declared. Yuri Zakharanka himself knew nothing about this inquiry, for he was not summoned to the Prosecutor's office.

In April, Uladzimir Vyalichkin, leader of the Brest initiative group aimed at creating the «Viasna-96» branch in this city, was fined 10 million roubles. He was accused for unauthorised picketing . On February 21 he was detained by policemen on Brest market holding placards saying «No to Belarusan-Russian union!» «16 May – presidential elections!» after this U.Vyalichkin was instituted a case in compliance with Article 167 (p.1) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus. Final verdict was brought just after four court sittings.

On 29 April, Galina Ku-nina was warned by Savetski district's court of Minsk for taking part in anti-nuclear action held on April 2. On that very day G.Kunina was beaten by unknown people wearing civilian clothes after what she spent 10 days in hospital.

Game in Non-Committal Replies

(continued from p. 5)

repression from 1920s – 1980s under Vitsebsk Council of Deputies asks to confirm if the property of the family was confiscated and whereto it was directed afterwards. For further investigation the materials should be directed to ... », such inquiry was sent to the official authorities. It was 1997. The Executive committee of the Vitsebsk region answered that the inquiry was directed to the special commission that should give the answer. No win situation again. No, of course, she received the answer from this commission; they even sent the letter to the Chairman of the Polatsk executive committee Makaranka. In this letter Yefrasinya Gukava was asked to send a document confirming that she was the daughter of the repressed Ambrosii Zuew.

At the same time this Commission asked for the documents confirming that the property of the Zuew family was really confiscated. As if Yefrasinya Gukava didn't have a document in which black on white was written that the fact of the robbery of the family's property by Bolsheviks was proven and that this property was turned over to the concrete collective farm (which had closed by now)!

Finally the Commission for the realisation of the rights of the victims of the political repression decided to put an end to this story. It sent Yefrasinya Gukava a letter in which the fact of the robbery of the property of Zuew family was confirmed according to the testimonies of the witnesses. It also reminded as it turned out that the citizen Gukava received the compensation: on the 16th of February 1995 Polatsk Executive Committee received the decision to pay her compensation for confiscated property in amount of ten minimal salaries...

There is one more interesting moment. Once when Yefrasinya Ambrosiewna came to the Polatsk Executive Committee with her grief she found out that she received 120 thousand roubles help as a victim of repression, and there is her «own» signature in the registration book confirming this. Of course, the woman didn't and couldn't recognise the signature. She was greatly shocked, of course, this is not big money, but money is not the point.

It was her last hope to send an inquiry to the Administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus. The answer came quickly and on a very good quality paper. It said, that her inquiry was directed ... of course to the Executive Committee of the Vitsebsk region.

Recently Yefrasinya Ambrosiewna received a phone call from this committee. She was told that her case had been studied one more time and there were no reasons to change the decision about compensation. She understood that she couldn't expect anything.

The small house of Yefrasinya Ambrosiewna that stands on the edge of the village Zyalyonki not far from the native Zharcy makes a bad impression. You feel you can't speak about prosperity here.

Yefrasinya Gikava's children visited her on holidays (it was the 8th of March – International Women's Day). They also were not hiding the fact that life is financially difficult. That explains why Yefrasinya Ambrosiewna is so stubbornly fighting for what the state took from her family. Her daughter joked sadly that it is easier to receive compensation from Germany for the crime the Germans committed during the war than to wait till the authorities of your own country will try to answer for the crimes that took place earlier.

Tsina PALYNSKAYA

From the editor:

Uladzimir Adamushka states in his book «Political repression of 20-50s in Belarus», that only in 1931 –1934 more than 260 thousand people were dispossessed their property and departed outside Belarus. Generally more than 600 thousand people were repressed during 20-50s..

Alyaksei SHYDLOWSKI

Eighteen Months in Hell

The next 7 days passed almost without interrogations: all that time they had been questioning Vadzim Labkovich. But to make up for it a dummy was fitted in to my cell who unsuccessfully tried to make me talk.

On the tenth day in the presence of Arsenii Skarulis, my first defender, I was officially charged against. The charges comprised the same information as before, but statements about the honour and dignity of the President disappeared. By the law I was to be sent to the custody centre in Zhodzina, but militia officers decided to test my nerves and to keep me there. After all I lost my nerve on the 12th day of imprisonment, September, 6, I announced a «dry hunger-strike». In an hour I was joined by Vadzim Labkobich. We claimed immediate release and cessation of the criminal action. But militia officers didn't find anything better' than to bit in an instigator who all that time was receiving parcels and suggesting with persistence that we should eat something. It took great efforts to resist the temptation.

On the 16th day of our imprisonment and the 4th day of the hunger-strike, September 10, we learned that the next day we were going to be sent to the custody centre in Zhodzina. Then Vadzim ceased his hunger-strike but I decided to go on till the victorious end.

We left the custody centre in Stoabtsy on September 11.

III. In clutches of «Black Stock»

Labkovich and I were put into «outazek» (an armoured van used for transporting convicts from town to town). Outwardly it looks like a van which usually draws bread. Inside it is divided into several departments: the largest one is for two armed militiamen and rest of them are called: «the boat» (meant for two), «glass» (there are two meant for one convict each) and «the common» (meant for 8 people). Thus the maximum number of transported convicts shouldn't exceed 12 people. But when we got into the van there had already been more than 20 convicts. Stuffiness, stench, squash and tossing through which you hit your head on the iron ceiling all the time. Somewhere in the middle of our way Vadzim who was in the «common» began vomit. As I still was on hunger-strike I just couldn't have the same problem. We spent 4 hours in the van and when we passed the prison gates the most difficult seemed to be left behind but even graver horrors awaited ahead.

The guards at the Zhodzina custody centre, after getting out of the van, made us run along the corridor to the «reception room» that wasn't very easy after such a «trip». Many fell down and immediately received kicks in the belly.



Alyaksei SHYDLOWSKI

In the room, which was tiled (later I realised it was done to wash blood off easily), they made us stand in a raw our faces to the wall and ordered not to turn. My curiosity won and I turned to see what was going on around and to feel two heavy blows on my back and legs. I fell down on the floor and heard almost a roar: «I ordered you not to turn!» I had to stand up and swinging (it was the 5th day of the hunger-strike), bump into the wall. Behind the head of the guard must have appeared, since all the guard began to use formal, respective «you». With the same roar an official statement was made (I cite): «You have arrived at the Zhodzina custody centre «The Black Stock». Here you are not human beings and we'll do our best to make you understand that. You cannot turn, even your head, without an order, you must move only running with you hands behind your backs, at the distance 2 metres from each other. When addressed you must give the full name (that is your family name, first name and patronymic name), date of birth, your parents, wives, articles, according to which you are here. I warn you: we'll beat you for a halt, we'll beat you for conversations. If someone makes up his mind to argue he won't reach his cell alive! Let's start!..»

And here when the «reception» started. The head of the guard would call a convict and he would go out and tell his data. Almost everyone, being nervous, halted and were severely beaten. When it was V.Labkovich's turn the guard's head announced:

Attention, please! Today there are the BPF members, lovers of flags tearing. Please, be very attentive to them!

Then I heard Vadzim being beaten two times (he was heard to fall down). Then he was guarded somewhere.

I was among the last to be called. Before providing information on myself I considered it necessary to say I was on hunger-strike. The face of the militia officer turned red and delivered two blows on my chest. I remained on my feet and tried to give information without a halt. I stumbled at the Articles of the Criminal Code and I felt punches on me from all around. I fell down and hit my forehead against the floor. At first I could feel incomprehensible spite rising in me. I wanted to fling myself at the guard but they must have understood that wish and moved couple metres away giving me a possibility to get up.

So, you like flags? Hey lads, will you draw a flag on his back?!

Militia men formed up two chains along the walls of the corridor and took out truncheons. I summoned up my strength and run through this «corridor», thanks to God, I was touched by any truncheon. But it was to early to be happy. I was ordered to back and to go through the «corridor» again. After this trip on my back there was really white-red-white flag depicted. The day after it turned dark-blue. I hardly reached my cell and fell down upon my cell-mates who helped me not to lose my consciousness. Everything went dark before my eyes and when five minutes later. I was called out to have my blood tested I was walking seeing nothing in front of me. Near the medical room, I leaned against the wall with my hands and, at once, received some blows on my kidneys, which was the last I remember. Then, according to my cell-mates-to-be, I fell on the floor and despite all the boot kicks didn't get up. The doctors ran out, took me under my arms to the room and laid me on to the bed. From time to time one could hear the words from the room: «We don't feel his pulsation! Blood pressure falls down! Quickly, give him an injection!»

Doctor told me later my heart had just stopped. An hour later I regained consciousness I saw a man in a white doctor's smock before my eyes. He told me: «Shydlowski, I've read about you. You should stop the hunger-strike immediately, otherwise you'll be buried in a week here,» he turned away but seeing there was nobody around he added; «On September 6 a convention of the Malady Front took place! They remember you! Hold on!»

I haven't seen the doctor since then but I am still grateful to him for those several words of support which were the first I had heard since the beginning of my imprisonment.

After 4 a.m. they injected something in my vein gave me ammonium chloride to smell at and slapped my face. Then the head of the medical department came and asked whether I was going to continue my hunger strike. After hearing «No» he ordered: «Take him to hospital!»

Once more they took my fingerprints, picture of me and then led me to the hospital cell.

(To be continued)

(Continuation. Beginning in №31)

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